

for the Congress. It is certainly a good day for the President and the administration.

In 1992, the budget deficit was \$290 billion. The forecast then was that the deficit for this year would be over \$400 billion. That was the forecast in 1992 for where we were headed if we didn't change course. We did change course. The President proposed, and the Congress passed, a plan in 1993, a 5-year plan, that has worked splendidly. In each and every year of that 5-year plan, the deficit came down. In 1997, we passed a bipartisan addition to that plan. That addition closed the gap, made the difference, and finished the job. Now we can report we have budget surpluses.

The job is not fully complete because while we are reporting a \$115 billion surplus this year, the Social Security surplus is \$124 billion. In this year, we are still using \$9 billion of that \$124 billion Social Security surplus for other things. We shouldn't do that. It ought to stop.

But what dramatic progress we have made. We have gone from budget deficits of \$290 billion just 7 years ago to a \$115 billion budget surplus this year, and we are within hailing distance of stopping the raid on the Social Security trust fund. The Social Security trust fund is a \$124 billion surplus in fiscal year 1999, and we are running a surplus of \$115 billion. So we are very close to stopping the raid on the Social Security trust fund.

I hope very much we are able to stay on that course. We know that is in real jeopardy for fiscal year 2000. We know that if everything plays out as is currently contemplated in the Appropriations Committees, we will be using between \$30 billion and \$40 billion of the Social Security surplus next year. We will be going backwards. Let's not do that. Let's not go backwards. Let's keep moving forward. Next year, let's be able to report that we are not using any of the Social Security surplus for any other purpose. That ought to be our goal.

We are now in this remarkable position of being able to say that if we stay the course, if we don't go out on some big, new spending binge, if we don't have some radical, reckless tax scheme, we will be able to balance the budget without counting Social Security and we will be able to eliminate the publicly held debt of the country in the next 15 years.

Every economist who has come before the Senate Budget Committee and every economist who has come before the Senate Finance Committee has said the highest and best use of these surpluses is to reduce the debt. What we did in 1993 confirms that view.

Remember that in 1993 we took action on a 5-year budget plan to reduce the deficit each and every year. The idea was, that would take pressure off

interest rates and that would give the greatest lift to the economy, that by reducing deficits and debt, we would reduce pressure on interest rates, that lower interest rates would help our economy perform more strongly, and we would improve our competitive position in the world.

How well that strategy and plan have served this country. Each and every year of that 5-year budget plan passed in 1993 we reduced the budget deficit. Each and every year we were moving towards lower spending as a percentage of our gross domestic product. Every year of that 5-year budget plan we were moving towards the point at which we could start reducing the national debt. That plan worked.

Now we are able to see the longest economic expansion in our history, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the lowest unemployment in 30 years, and the lowest welfare rates in 30 years, with total spending of the Federal Government being reduced. We have gone from 22.7 percent of our national income, our gross domestic product, going to the Federal Government to this year it being down to 19 percent. We are headed in the right direction. Let's keep that up.

Let's move to a circumstance in which we will be able to report next year that we have stopped raiding the Social Security trust fund. Let's be able to report that we are on schedule to eliminate the publicly held debt of the United States in 15 years. What a great thing that would be for our country. How well that would position us for the baby-boom generation, because pretty soon we baby boomers are going to start to retire. We are going to add dramatically to the burden on the Federal Government from Social Security and Medicare, and the single best way to prepare for that eventuality is to reduce publicly held debt. We can do it. It is within our grasp. But we have to avoid new spending schemes and we have to avoid risky tax schemes if we are going to deliver on that promise.

I hope very much that together we will stay the course and put America in a circumstance in which it is able to announce in 15 years that there is no publicly held debt in America. What a great circumstance that would be for our Nation. I can't think of anything that would be a better present to our children and our grandchildren than to be able to eliminate the publicly held debt in the next 15 years.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want to make a few comments about the subject of education.

We will have two votes later today on two competing resolutions offered by

the majority leader and the Democratic leader here in the Senate on the subject of education. I would like to make a couple of comments about that general subject.

Some long while ago, I was touring refugee camps as a member of a hunger committee in the House of Representatives. One of the camps I recall visiting was on the border between Honduras and Guatemala.

At the United Nations High Command for Relief Operations camp that they were running there on the border of Guatemala, I saw a lot of impoverished people who had been forced to leave their homes and were living in the camp. I visited with some of them through an interpreter. One older fellow, probably in his seventies, could not speak English but he motioned with his hands for me to come with him.

So I followed him about 20 paces or so back to this area where he was living in a tent with so many others. The refugees at this camp had cots to sleep on, and this fellow reached under his cot, and from among his meager belongings, which would have fit in one small knapsack, he pulled out a very small book. Then he grinned a rather toothless grin. He had only a few teeth in his mouth, but his smile was a mile wide as he held up this book to show me. The interpreter who had walked with me into that tent said: He wants to show you the book he is learning to read.

Here was a man living in a refugee camp, sleeping on a cot, in a tent with many others with only a meager subsistence who was proud to show a visitor that he was learning to read. The book he held up to show me was the Spanish equivalent of a "See Spot Run" book. In halting Spanish, he read a couple of pages, and the interpreter interpreted what he was reading for me.

I have always remembered those circumstance because there on that dirt floor, in that tent, in that refugee camp, this fellow in his seventies was enormously proud of being able to learn to read, even though he was on his first primer book.

This story illustrates for a lot of people how important it is to be educated and to have opportunity. How does it happen that opportunity exists in some societies and not in others? How does it happen that we in America have been so fortunate while some others have not?

I have told my colleagues before that one of the first visits I made when I came to Congress was to the oldest Member of Congress at the time, Claude Pepper. He was then in his late eighties. Above the chair in his office were two photographs autographed to him. The first photograph was of Orville and Wilbur Wright making the first airplane flight. Orville Wright had

autographed it to Congressman Claude Pepper before he died. Beneath it was an autographed picture of Neil Armstrong walking on the Moon, also autographed to Congressman Claude Pepper.

I was struck by those two gifts from the first persons who learned to fly and then from the first person to fly to the Moon—autographed pictures that occurred in the span of Congressman Pepper's lifetime.

What was it that caused that explosion of knowledge, learning, and technology? The answer: Education. It was our education system that said to every young boy or girl in this country: You can become whatever you want to become. You can be a physicist, a scientist, a doctor, a barber, a mechanic. You decide what you want to become, and our education system allows your young minds to flower and to develop their full potential.

How is it that in our country we invented the television, we invented the computer, we invented plastic, radar, the silicon chip, we learned to fly, we flew to the Moon, and now we splice genes? That all comes from education.

This education system of ours is not perfect. Through public education in America, we have decided there will be universal opportunity for all children and our obligation is to maintain a public school system to provide that opportunity for all. In our public schools in this country, we have about 53 million students who went to school this morning, 53 million children in kindergarten through high school, and that number is going to continue to increase. Our challenge is to have education policies that invest in our schools to make sure those children are attending good schools.

When they walk through the door of a school, we want to make certain children have a good learning environment. Yet we have crumbling schools across this country. I have spoken on the floor at length about some Indian schools I have visited that no one in this Chamber would want their children to attend, but there is not enough money to invest in fixing these crumbling schools. What are we doing to attract and retain the best teachers? Do we have enough money to do that?

Some say these things are too expensive. Yet in the Senate we have folks saying, although we cannot increase education funding, we have enough resources to provide a \$792 billion tax cut over 10 years. That is our priority, they say. But we do not have enough money to fund this Federal investment in education. In fact, what has happened is that the \$792 billion tax cut is only possible if we put a squeeze on domestic discretionary spending that means there is not enough money to fund education.

My colleagues on Friday described the consequences of the Republican ac-

tions. The Republican budget allocation for education, which is 17 percent lower than the 1999 levels, would provide 5,246 fewer new qualified teachers, 50,000 students would be denied after-school and summer school programs, 142,000 children denied access to Head Start, 100,000 students denied Pell grant awards, and the list goes on because there is not adequate funding to do that.

Some of us believe there are certain obligations we have to maintain a strong public education system. To do that, we have put forward a proposal that does not cost very much but that would allow the refurbishing and remodeling of 6,000 public schools nationwide. Many of these schools across the country were built after the second world war and many of them are in desperate need of modernization and repair. This is a need not currently being met, and we have proposed a method to meet it. Helping local communities to reduce class sizes by being able to hire more teachers, ensuring teachers get the professional development they need to stay on top of their subject matter, increased funding for special education, and providing 1 million more children with access to constructive afterschool programs—all of these are important ingredients for developing a public education system we can be proud of and one that continues to work.

There is a big difference in these proposals and what those on the other side of the aisle have proposed. I am proud to be part of a political party that has always viewed education and investment in this country's children as a priority. There are some people serving in the Senate who have said let's abolish the Federal Department of Education. They have stopped actively trying to do that because they know it is massively unpopular with the American people and so we do not hear much from them anymore. But that is what they believe; that is what they would like to do. They have a right to that belief. I respect that, but I disagree with it profoundly because this country's future progress and opportunities rest on our ability to educate our future, our young children. It is our responsibility to educate our children in good schools with good teachers in classrooms that are safe.

I hope that, when we vote on the education resolutions before us this evening and when we continue to discuss this issue in the days ahead, we might reach a consensus among everyone in this Chamber that education ought to be the engine driving the budget train. It ought not be the caboose on this appropriations train, it should be the lead car. Education ought not be dealt with as an afterthought. It ought to be the priority for this Congress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I make a point of order a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FAMILY FARMERS AND THE TRADE DEFICIT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want to take some time to talk about a couple of items that are related to the desperate crisis facing America's family farmers. One, what the conference committee on Agriculture Appropriations, of which I am a member, is doing—or, as is more accurate, not doing—to help them. Second, I want to talk to the issue of the burgeoning growing trade deficit.

I will talk for a moment about the Agriculture appropriations bill which is now in conference between the Senate and the House. I am a conferee. The Senate passed its version of that bill and included roughly \$7.4 billion in emergency help for family farmers because prices have collapsed and farmers are in desperate trouble. We passed that on August 4.

Weeks and weeks went by and nothing happened. No conference. No meetings. Then last week, those of us who are conferees met with the House of Representatives. Then the Chair called an adjournment. The Members of the House called an adjournment, and we have not met since. Nearly a week later, and there has been no meeting since.

Why? They are all hung up on the House side of the conference with respect to the question of whether we should retain embargoes on food and medicine.

The answer to that is simple: Of course not. Of course we should not retain any embargoes on food and medicine. That is what the Senate said. By a vote of 70, the Senate said let us stop using food as a weapon.

We have used food as a weapon against Cuba, Iran, Iraq, North Korea—you name it. We have embargoes. I do not have any problems with embargoes against countries that are behaving badly, but the embargo should not include food. Why would you want to include food and medicine in embargoes that hurt the poor folks around the globe, the people who need the food and medicine?

I have always maintained that when we put an embargo on food shipments anywhere in the world, it is the equivalent of shooting ourselves in the foot. When you do it for 40 years, it is almost unforgivable. It is one thing to shoot yourself in the foot; it is another